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# The implementation of quality management in higher education

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## Abstract

The quality of any society allows everyone to discover, enhance and use their own skills. Without access to education, the previous statement has no meaning. In order to function properly, the whole education system must be based on a very high level of quality. The quality system is a combination of organizational structures, responsibilities, procedures and management resources to implement quality-oriented economic efficiency. Adequate implementation of the total quality management (TQM) is a methodology that can help teachers adapt to environmental change.

*Keywords:* quality, Total Quality Management, policies

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## 1. Need for quality in higher education

The university - one of the main cells of education in the human society- „summarizes, at small scale the tendencies, the society’s movement evolutions. It is the phalanx that opens the self-critical analysis’ path, it starts the debates between orientations, the concentration, it initiates and stimulates the conflict of ideas ; it is often the theatre of the struggle for holding the power field”. The actual moment represents “ a fraction of a long series of crises, some of them being inherent, of growth, some of them caused by the tendencies of the political field.

According to some analysts, we pass through a period which tests the academic field’s capacity to resist pressures, the hostility towards the elites that are being produced, the serious financial difficulties that advance until function blocking, the attitude of abandonment manifested by some members of the teaching staff”.

That is why this university crisis is multiple and profound and it manifests itself by:

1. The resources crisis, a large and complex perimeter, in which are included: human resources crisis, especially visible in numerical and qualitative deficit of the teaching staff, in the ‘inflation’ of top posts, the chronic shortage of middle-aged teaching staff and extremely difficult living conditions and activity of young age teachers, also the support resources crisis, manifested in the extremely critical situation of based education as well as in the massive financing difficulties of education.

2. The adaptability crisis, the university faces serious obstacles flanked by its perennial mission to generate social ‘renewal ideas’ and to form the people of tomorrow society, plus the imperative of solving urgently the requirements deriving from immediate pressure of the social environment.

3. The adaptability difficulties reveal, in a more profound plan, the existence of the orientation crisis; the ‘homo academicus’ is split between the world today and the world tomorrow; representation difficulties of society’s future is also seen in the academic field.

To surpass this crisis, the specialists highlight four scenarios:

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1. "WORKS THIS WAY TOO!" is essentially focused on a 'withdrawal' and indifferent attitude, in the company of poor material conditions and on the idea that things will level themselves, requiring only time and patience;

2. "BEGIN TO CHANGE MENTALITIES!" – assumes the impossibility of increasing resources, due to serious economical difficulties, surmountable actually by using the only leverage available- the changing of mentalities and behaviors, act which implies:

- The lucid and accurate identification of slippages and responsibilities that belongs to academic market's actors in directions concerning the performance of teaching staff and students, the respect for academic values, selecting the right competences, eliminating the values confusion and corruption;
- overcoming the "back-up attitudes" and effective conduct of authentically knowledge around which will form "action groups", "the current renewed thinking" that can switch out the "participatory ethos".

3. "LET'S INVEST NOW"- relies actually on the situation study and the extremely harmful effects concerning the wear out of university's infrastructure, the inequitable distribution of resources between University Profiles and teachers' financial situation; In this context there is only one option : "we invest in education otherwise we perish as a spiritual force"

4. "THE SIMULTANEOUS CHANGE OF CONDITIONS AND ACTORS!"- includes the fortunate solution, the positive alternative of university's evolution, given that "any changing process means simultaneous intervention on morphological, psycho-sociological and social-structural factors"

The university is an "educational machine" with "continuous shoot". The continuity and discontinuity, the natural evolution and the caused restructure must blend in. To put in other words, the reform is not "the simple modernization of the content or methods, nor the simple depletion of schedules or time tables. It is a global reform which modifies the whole educational system in accordance with the democratic and substantial transformations occurred in Romania ". Inside and in the basis of the system reform of national education was founded the option for the next major and strategic objectives:

- the restructuring of higher education for satisfying the needs of a economical competitive society, with a culture based on the pluralistic democracy's values that are active and participative.
- The increase of enclosing capacity of higher education, simultaneously with the increment its quality in accordance with European and international standards
- Motivating the population for maintaining a considerable partaking enthusiasm in higher education, in particular for the economical disadvantaged one.

All these issues related to the implementation of university management as well as the success of these strategies cannot be achieved without a proper university management which would coordinate an academic and unitary system of quality in higher education.

This is necessary for developing an higher academic institution because for her durability and credibility any other institution must:

1. Ensure the compliance with some minimum standards for each activity performed
2. Provide information on performance quality and standards for activities performed
3. Improve continuously the quality of all activities conducted by promoting new ideas and their adjustment to its own institutional profit
4. Ensure full transparency

Whatever is the reason for the young people to study at the university, for hiring or for completing their knowledge in some academic areas, they must obtain a "quality education", also to gain knowledge and competence at world-class level. For this it must be better identified customer segments, also : students, their families, employers and the government, to insure quality by meeting specified requirements and to strive for exceeding customer expectations.

Students are the ones targeted as the most important clients, but also their parents, future employers, the government and society in general, the professors and the whole academic staff, the ones that actually provides quality to education process. Several programs like this one have been initiated, some successfully implemented, but the most recent one is total quality management (TQM).

In most countries, there is introduced the accreditation of state and private academic programs in order to provide conditions for the ensure a minimum standard level nationally. However, some questions remain worth reflecting at, such as: „What quality in education means?“, „How can be ensured the academic services quality in universities?“ or „How can the academic quality services be improved?“

Of the ones presented, stimulating ideas result for new investigations of private or state universities in the following directions:

1. Applying some methods for specific needs identification of the communities in which the university exists, for creating an accurate structure needed by the graduates;
2. Identifying developing methods and programs restructuring, also education plans meant for meeting specific client requirements
3. Defining and adopting “zero defects” concept in the university’s specific, using ideas from faculty’s management and its teaching staff;
4. Using appropriate techniques for exceeding “zero defects” objective from which should not lack the PSC, statistic processes control of the teaching staff;
5. Creating a main standard for self-evaluation in progress measurement towards “zero defects”
6. Generating a larger transparency of university’s strategy for both students and general public and academic communities;
7. In ensuring the quality in the university is to be provided a valuable system according to ISO 9000 standards for opening TQM path.

## **2. Quality domain policies in higher education**

The world has realized that states’ economical successes are directly determined by the quality of their education systems and the most efficient production factor is the human one, expressed in knowledge, competence, creative capacities and moral qualities of society members that consist largely in education system.

The specialists pronounce in this matter that in the 21 century’s economy the education system will become a prior production branch, being seen like an occupational sphere, like a sphere of advantageous investments. This mission conception of education will dominate educational state policy in most of countries of the world in the 21 century.

At the moment we are witnesses of an economical, political, social and cultural interactions between nations and people, that isn’t taking into account the geographical boundaries. It became popular the concept of “global village” which comes to underline the inter-dependencies of all inhabitants on Earth.

The globalization process, known also as internationalization is ongoing. This process was accelerated by the events and progresses that occurred recently and the one that substantially changed whole world structure, specifically by the technological revolution and dramatic political changes, linked to the ending of Cold War.

Even today, the technological revolution considerable contributes at the transformation of the Earth into a global village. If before the images and messages needed days and weeks to traverse oceans, today this is produced in split seconds. One of the technological revolution’s impacts was the one that highlighted intelligence, education and instruction’s priority, in other words, the forming of human chapter.

Science and technology evolution is produced in an accelerated rhythm. The new informing and communication technologies have an increasingly influence on education, on educative institution’ set up, on the role of the teacher and his relations with students, on student’s autonomy development.

One of the process’ dimensions of globalizing is also the culture modifying, including education. The rapid spreading of new ways of cultural expression, the education realized at world scale through “virtual” universities, are characteristic features of globalizing process. There is an intense cooperation of universities within the international scientific networks that aren’t taking into account the boundaries.

Globalizing impact on education and job training is manifested firstly in the extent of transactional education of the “virtual” universities in which today learn over one million students, through changing the student-teacher relationships, through knowledge necessity more profound than at least two foreign languages of international

circulation, through accent placement in education on multiculturalism, through open education spreading and from distance one and life-time education, through revision curriculum necessity concerning the globalizing of contents and academic process.

In today's Europe the risk of the weakening of social collision/cohesion? which is necessary at different levels, especially for guaranteeing all citizenship concerning education access, the social dialogue between different groups and nations, the active participation of every citizen at social life, economical and cultural, as well as in decisions making.

In Europe's countries the societies are very diverse due to the presence of different ethnic and cultural minorities and immigrants communities, as well as an increasing mobility of persons.

This rising diversity is not risk free, because life becomes complex, social relationships grow to be more dissimilar, and the school is dealing with the presence of foreign students, also with a intensification of violence behaviors.

Education and job training run when the mobility expands at students' international scale and employees, when the impact of new technologies is felt more and more, when the radical changing of working is produced, in the same time with the apparition of an European job market and multinational enterprises, when the training cannot limit anymore only to several periods in the individual's life, they must proceed the whole life, when education cannot be realized without the participation of local community.

All these caused the fact that currently the policies and European educational strategies are oriented mainly towards education in the spirit of democratic citizenship and of social cohesion.

The educational systems must face different challenges, evolutions and problems concerning in both own domain of education and in the entire society. In these conditions the role of education increases as a factor that contributes crucially at social cohesion. Education can also contribute in different manners to democratic citizenship and to social cohesion.

For an active and conscious citizenship the education begins at school and continues the whole life through promoting the next fundamental values:

1. The insertion, not the exclusion
2. The tolerance, not the propensity for conflict
3. The sense of responsibility, not the passivity
4. The ration and the objectivity, not the subjectivity and the irrational.

For this to function properly, the whole educational system must relay on a very high quality level. In every developed society the quality allows each individual to discover, to amplify and to use his own aptitudes. Without this quality, the access at education has no sense anymore.

It is recognized by everyone that equity is a previous condition for social cohesion, and the lack of chances equality in terms of access at education would result with the exclusion, meaning the undermining of social cohesion. Every citizen has the right to have access to a high quality education and to benefit from it. Nevertheless, in educational terms, the chances equality remains a fundamental problem.

In some countries, higher educational institution are turning more autonomous in evaluation matters. It is considered that a solution for the delicate problem of institution's intern evaluation (or "self-evaluation") and an external control made by an inspection body. In this regard, in many countries there is questioned the redefining role of inspectors in educational system.

A growing numbers of governments consider that self-evaluation of educational institutions as an important key for analyse process of these institutions, which implies purchasing by the institutions concerned of the capacities to self-evaluate. For the integration in Europe new competences are necessary for both individual persons but as well for the entire society. Among these competences the following are more important: Entrepreneurial spirit; Cooperation spirit; Communication capacities, of like in the society and of participation; Organizing the own work autonomously; The capacity of collaboration with cultural and different nationality origin colleagues; The capacity of using the new technologies of informing an communication; Language skills.

National and international competence requires tackling the quality in higher education's domain and the performance can be realized not only there the quality policy become essence in the life of the university.

Mediocrity culture which bloomed in some of Romanian universities must be replaced by a culture of excellence that is able to distinguish the authentic values from non-values and to promote them in the new hierarchical systems based on the performance's metric.

Quality policies are real force and motivation fields that can generate themselves from the higher segment decider in our country, also from academic management at the level of each university. These policies are structured on institutional objectives and on objectives of organizational culture. In the first case the structures and procedures are followed, and in the second case it aims at systems of values, evaluations metrics and creating of new behavior attitudes.

**Entropical policies.** In the case of entropical policies the higher educational system is seen like a very well determined system and characterized by a set of parameters which define at the level of each university and respectively at the level of Ministry of Education. These parameter can be evaluated based on some criteria and correlations.

By evaluating all the defined parameters it can be obtained the system's status at a time. Any modification of the parameters' value leads to the changing of the status in which the academic system is situated. Each status of the system is characterized by a certain entropicity, which shows system's degree of organization, meaning its restructuring or its structural optimizing leads to a systemic status different from the initial one.

In other words, through an entropical policy there can be modified the academic system' status in a way that would correspond to new demands.

**Stimulative policies.** The stimulative policies are field policies in the sense that the Ministry of Education does not forcing the introduction of quality ensurement in universities, taking as reference the quality standards ISO 9001, but created a motivational field for developing and implementation of management and quality systems.

Stimulative policies can be correlated also with the effort of some organization that are interested in the quality educational improvement in universities. These policies are typical for those educational systems in which the academic autonomy is full, managerial speaking but also financial. Significant examples concerning this reason are the universities from USA and Great Britain.

**Comprehension policies.** In the last years, the reform in higher education emphasized on decentralization and academic autonomy. Building a new, real and functional academic autonomy limitates the implementation of some entropical policies of quality ensurement. In the same time though, robustness and efficiency. In this matter, for higher Romanian education, the approach of stimulative policies of quality ensurement is premature.

Within this comprehensive policy an important role is played by the managerial training of rectors, vice-rectors, deans, assistant dean and heads of departments to understand the importance of the problem and the responsibility that comes from accepting quality's ensurement implementation. The policy of implementation of quality management and for quality ensurement based on three fundamental concepts: accreditation, evaluation and certification.

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